



Elections and Electoral Registration Review Panel Annual Report 2018

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Surrey County Council By-election – 6 December 2018

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Electoral Registration

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The revised Register was published on 1 December 2017. Publicity regarding electoral registration in the first half of 2018 was linked to the voter ID Pilots held on 3 May 2018. Details of the work carried out for these elections was reported to Council on 26 July 2018. As such, this section details the other activities carried out in 2018, including the Annual Canvass.

2.0 Registration Activity

- 2.1 In the week commencing 12 February 2018 letters were sent to all electors in the Borough and also to all properties with no registered electors, providing information about the forthcoming ID pilot in May 2018.
- 2.2 Although the number of new registrations in this period was less than when Household Notification Letters (HNLs) are issued, Officers viewed individual notification of the ID pilot to be the priority in February 2018 (332 new applications compared to 850 new applications in the same period in 2017). However, it should be noted that there was no discernible impact on the overall level of registrations before the election, rather the distribution of the registrations was more concentrated to nearer to the election.
- 2.3 The deadline to register for the Borough elections was Tuesday, 17 April 2018. Electors who had submitted their applications had until Tuesday, 24 April to be verified to be included on the election register. If any new applicants could not be verified automatically, they were contacted to provide supporting evidence during this period. There were no problems with the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the online registration system for these elections.

3.0 Maintenance of the Register

Absent Vote Refresh

- 3.1 In January 2018, all absent voters with a personal identifier which was more than five years old were contacted to update their signature. Electors had six weeks to respond to the request, and if no response was received after six weeks, the absent vote for the elector was removed.
- 3.2 3,205 electors were contacted with a new absent vote application form to obtain updated details. After three weeks, a reminder was sent to 626 electors. 223 electors did not respond to either the initial request or the reminder and the postal vote for these electors was removed accordingly. These were electors were given the opportunity to re-apply for their postal vote when they were notified that the existing postal vote arrangement had been cancelled.

Data Checking

- 3.3 The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) uses Council sources to identify new electors to add to the Register. Regular updates from Council Tax are received, which lists the details of properties where the person liable for the Council Tax has changed. This information is cross referenced with the Electoral Register, and a Household Enquiry Form (HEF) is sent out, to encourage the new occupants to register and confirm which electors can be removed from the Register. Changes to tenancy arrangements for WBC owned properties is also used to maintain the Register.

- 3.4 The Electoral Register is updated regularly with property updates from the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), and once it is verified that the new properties are occupied, HEFs are sent to obtain the new occupier details.

Electoral Reviews

- 3.5 The ERO reviews entries for electors where there is reason to believe that they are no longer resident at a property on a regular basis. Reasons for reviewing electors include notification of new residents at a property and post being returned from an elector as being undelivered.
- 3.6 Reviews are carried out when the ERO has received notification that an elector is no longer living at a property, but does not have secondary, collaborating information, such as Council Tax data, which is required to remove the elector from the Register.
- 3.7 Between 1 December 2017 and 1 September 2018, 1,360 electors were reviewed and removed from the Register

4.0 Polling District and Polling Place Review

- 4.1 A full review of the parliamentary polling districts and polling places review was carried out in October and November 2018. The Council agreed the new arrangements at its meeting on 6 December 2018.
- 4.2 The Council agreed that in most cases, the existing arrangements were still suitable for electors in the Borough. Once change was made to the polling district arrangements, to create a new polling district for Brockhill. This will enable the electors to vote at the Goldsworth Park Guides and Scouts Headquarters, based at the Generation Centre on Denton Way. An additional polling district was required as Brockhill is in a different Surrey County Council Electoral Division.
- 4.3 Unfortunately no suitable alternative to using the Oaktree Infant School could be identified therefore this will continue to be used as the polling place for St John's East in 2019. Officers are working with the school to determine the best arrangements to put in place for May 2019. Officers will be drawing up proposals for a permanent community facility in the area in 2019.

5.0 Annual Canvass

- 5.1 The normal canvass arrangements applied in 2018, following the email canvass pilot in 2017. All households were contacted in August 2018 with all households being sent a Household Enquiry Form (HEF). A reminder HEF was sent to non-responding properties in September 2018.
- 5.2 As a trial, non-responders properties in the Board School Road and Maybury polling districts received a personal visit at the first reminder stage, with a view to improving the response rate for those areas, whilst reducing postage/printing costs for the canvass. Whilst there was a good response from the personal visits, however, there was less of a response from the final mail out of the second reminder HEF.
- 5.3 25 canvassers carried out the second reminder, personal visit stage of the canvass in October 2018, visiting all other properties that had not responded to the previous correspondence (either by email or by post). In total, 13,651 properties were included in this stage (31.8%).
- 5.4 Electors from 18,963 properties used the automated response services. There was a reduction compared to 2017, which peaked at 22,634 (52.9%) however this can be attributed to the different methodology used as part of the email canvass pilot. Although

email reminders were sent through to non-responding electors, directing them to the automated responses, this was not as effective as in 2017. When compared to the 2016 canvass however, which followed the same method, there was an increase of 1.8% of electors using the automated responses.

5.5 A full breakdown of the responses is set out below.

	2016		2017		2018	
Remote Service Use	46.2%		57.5%		48.0%	
Response Format	No of Properties	% of all responses	No of Properties	% of all responses	No of Properties	% of all responses
Online	12,036	30.9	19,102	48.6	13,336	33.8
Telephone	3,144	8.1	1,551	3.9	3,122	7.9
SMS	2,406	6.2	1,981	5.0	2,505	6.3

5.6 The returned postal canvass forms were also sorted to identify those forms where no changes to the details had been made. Of the responses received, 78% did not change the details for the property.

5.7 Additional data matching exercises were carried out during the canvass. Data from Council Tax, Housing Benefits and Housing was used to identify empty properties and also to verify occupancy at a property, which enabled historic entries on the register to be removed.

5.8 The revised register was published on 1 December 2018, with an overall response rate was 91.9%. This was slightly lower than last year's response rate (although more properties responded overall).

5.9 A breakdown of the returns by polling district is set out below:

	Forms Received	% Received
A1 - West Byfleet	1,588	96.8
A2 - Byfleet	3,098	92.6
B1 - Town Centre	644	88.7
B2 - Town Centre North	280	86.4
B3 - Walton Road	736	85.1
B4 - Sheerwater	1,329	89.9
B5 - Board School Road	632	91.3
B6 - Woodham	500	95.2
C1 - Goldsworth West	1,972	92.7
C2 - Goldsworth Central	728	89.1
C3 - Goldsworth East	1,095	85.9
D1 - Brookwood	598	94.8
D2 - Brookwood South	203	95.3
D3 - Mayford	729	93.6
D4 - Hook Heath	1,078	95.9
D5 - Barnsbury	697	91.1
D6 - Sutton Green	169	100.0
E1 - Westfield	1,240	88.4

E2 – Kingfield	1,026	87.7
E3 - Shackleford Road	64	95.5
E4 - Old Woking	1,214	88.0
E5 - Gresham Park	47	97.9
F1 - Horsell West	2,014	96.0
F2 - Horsell South	532	96.9
F3 - Horsell East	1,022	96.1
G1 - Knaphill West	2,361	90.1
G2 - Knaphill South	177	92.2
G3 - Knaphill East	1,518	91.2
G4 - Knaphill North	16	100.0
H1 - Mount Hermon West	2,825	91.8
H2 - Mount Hermon East	1,826	88.6
J1 – Maybury	695	85.2
J2 - Maybury South	95	92.2
J3 – Pyrford	1,980	96.9
J4 - Pyrford North	856	96.7
K1 - St John`s West	1,811	92.5
K2 - St John`s Central	1,098	95.5
K3 - St John`s East	1,007	89.8

5.10 The following information is given as a comparison of the register as at 1 September 2018, (the last publication of the rolling registration updates before the canvass) and the register as published on 1 December 2018.

Register	1 September 2018	1 December 2018
No. of Electors	74,399	73,149
Attainers (16 and 17 year olds)	781 (of whom 669 were turning 18 before 30 November 2018)	521
18 year olds	not available	853
Over 76s	6,724	6,702
Postal Voters	13,531	13,209
Opt-Out of Edited Register	50,616	50,044

5.11 The number of electors fell during the canvass. However, this is a normal registration pattern, as the HEF sent to properties as part of the annual canvass does not register electors. Registration forms are sent to newly identified electors, who register separately. 634 electors registered between 23 November 2018 (deadline for 1 December register) and 11 December 2018 (deadline for the January register update), and, similarly, a further 606 electors registered before 10 January 2019 for the February register update.

5.12 Electors who turn 18 in the course of the year (1 December 2017 – 30 November 2018) are included in the attainer figures. Also included in the attainer figures are 16 year olds, who will turn 17 in the same period. Whilst the number of attainers dropped during the canvass, this will indicate that a large number of these electors turned 18, and therefore are no longer

classed as attainers. As the newly identified attainer electors complete their registrations, the attainer numbers will increase. At 1 February 2019, there are now 636 attainer electors.

6.0 Referrals to Surrey Police

- 6.1 One elector was reported to Surrey Police under section 13D(1) and (6) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, providing false information to the Electoral Registration Officer.

Surrey County Council By-election

6 December 2018

1.0 Overview

1.1 A by-election for The Byfleets County Electoral Division was held on Thursday 6 December 2018. The Division consisted of all electors in the West Byfleet (A1) Byfleet (A2) and Pyrford North (J4) polling districts. In total the electorate for the referendum was 10,028.

2.0 Poll Cards

2.1 The poll cards were issued on 9 November. No issues were reported with the poll card issue.

3.0 Postal Votes

3.1 1,762 postal votes were issued on 22 November. Several opening sessions were held prior to polling day.

3.2 A summary of the returned postal votes is set out below:

Area	Envelopes returned	Statements rejected at pre-scanning stage	Statements rejected at scanning stage	Ballot Papers rejected after the scanning stage	Total Ballot Papers included at the Count
The Byfleets	1,100	13	27	0	1,060

3.3 The table below sets out the details of the postal vote statements rejected at the scanning stage:

	Valid	Total Rejected	Rejected			% Rejected
			DOB and Sig	DOB	Sig	
The Byfleets	1,060	27	4	6	17	2.50

3.4 Overall, 40 postal vote statements were rejected, which equated to a 3.60% rejection rate.

4.0 Polling Stations

4.1 Six polling stations were used for the by-election; three at the St John's Cornerstone Centre and three at Byfleet Village Hall. A Deputy Returning Officer visited these polling stations on polling day, collecting any postal votes which had been handed in.

4.2 Eighteen people were employed to work in the polling stations. Staff attended a briefing session on Monday, 3 December 2018, which detailed the key issues for the election.

5.0 Verification and Count

5.1 The count was held following the close of polls in the Kemp Room at the HG Wells Conference and Events Centre.

5.2 34 people were employed to work at the count. There were two count teams, each composed of one count supervisor, one count assistant supervisor and 12 count assistants. Four count assistants on one count team were used to check the postal votes that were delivered with the Presiding Officers following the close of polls. Once these postal votes and statements had been checked, the ballot papers were allocated to a count team for verification and inclusion in the count.

6.0 Turnout

6.1 The overall turnout for the election was 23%. The postal vote response rate was 60%.

7.0 Candidates' Expenses

7.1 All the candidates for the election have submitted their election expenses returns.